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A

DESCRIPTION
OF THE
ACADEMY
OF THE
Athenian Virtuosi:

*Academy of the Athenian Virtuosi
London*

WITH
A DISCOURSE *held there in Vindication of*
Mr. Dryden's Conquest of Granada;
Against the Author of the Censure
of the R O T A.

*Tibi cor limante Minervā
Acrius, & tenues finxerunt pectus Athene.
Nè valeam, si non multo sapit altius istud,
Quod cum panticibus laxis, & cum pede grandi,
Et rubro pulmone vetus, nasisque timendum,
Omnia crudelis lanius per compita portat. Mart.*

L O N D O N,
Printed for Maurice Atkins. 1673.

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*A Discourse beld there in Vindication of
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NO sooner does any person merit the bewitching name of a good Author, but he has the happiness to meet with envy; yet every one who will not spare the perishing paper deserves not this title, though he cares his Rea-

der with those flattering Epithets of *gentle*, and *candid*, since even the Stationer sometimes circumvents your good opinion with the same appellatives. But such an Authour who seems to command his fame rather than receive it from the world, he like moral vertue (which is plac'd between two opposites of excess and defect) shall be sure to find a Parallel opposition from two sorts of vitious Criticks. I may justly stile them so, the one a poor dwindled Critick, who is in that defect of wit and judgement, that his endeavour is only to be thought to have a small portion, by the detracting of them in another. The other is in that excess of conceit that he cannot forbear to discover by his own vanity his judgement to be illegitimate. Now no place abounds with more witty writers, and worse judges than this City of *London*, whilst true Criticks are more moderate, being conscious of those peccadilloes, that every Writer as man must be subject to. They know that expert *Homer* sometimes may be took napping; therefore they willingly allow Poets with Painters to rove in a large field of fancy, often repeating,

— *banc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim,*

and as wise men think themselves generally too green to fall on and Criticize, remembering that *Maxime of Lon-*

Longinus, a better judge sure than any of these dare ever aspire to be,

ἡ τῶν λόγων κρίσις πολλὰς ἐστὶ τέρας

τελευταίον ἐπηγνήμα, that Criticisme must be

the deliberation of much experience. But these bastard Criticks without any examination convict any Author and presently suspend him: but who gave them this authority? I am sure they were never qualified for the place by Nature, or by Art; how then can any one expect the least justice from them, when their Justice only holds a sword in her hands without any scales, and may be accounted blind from her ignorance, and not from impartiality? Since then I am to speak to the Athenian *Virtuosi*, I hope it may be lawful to borrow two Greek words which will more emphatically denote them. There be some that damn a book *ἐρμηνεύοντες*, that is, not interpreting or understanding the Author, and these in our English tongue are called *Fopps*, Persons whose judgement lyes alwayes in the ear never in the brain, who hear what others say, and then speak like them: they are just like an *Eccho*, a reiterating voice, and nothing else: as Poets are painted licking up what old *Homer* let fall, so these lap up the Critical vomit which another has ejected. What judgement can they give of a book whose palat is solely Critical, and they were never at any time stil'd judges, unless

unless when with the cusp of their tongue they could determine of the virtue or vice of a glass of *Burgundy*, and as one said well when he forbade any one to read his book with prejudice, or after dinner, these very persons, for these two reasons since their heads are alwaies fill'd with prejudice, and the fumes of a full stomach, by all sober men are thought unfit to be of a Jury.

The other sort are *παρρησιασμενοι*, or as they are called by others *ὀρθροειρητικοι*, persons which do not only interpret badly, which they do, but also doe it wilfully. I can only fancy them a sort of vermin with very little eyes, but many teeth, and nailes, who though they cannot doe much harm, by reason of their weakness, yet strive to make up that want with their malice. These creatures for the most part live by gnawing of books, and never leave nibbling, till they can make some hole to discover some imperfection, whilst they deface the book of its native beauties, and expose those faults which themselves have made. Thus having shew'd you the malignity of these animals, being inclin'd by a strong habit to inhumanity, they are like butchers, not to be permitted to sit upon the life and death of an Author. Such as these who think themselves Criticks, but are not so, have endeavour'd to traduce the writings of Mr. *Dryden*, when true Criticks, if they would, are asham'd to decry them, whilst others that are more modest

modest than to be pretenders, justly admire them. As for my self, I never had the satisfaction of his acquaintance, which frees me from the suspicion of an *officious vindication*, yet I do know him, though far better in his Playes, and what has been my misfortune to want in the society of the father, has been some way made up in the ingenious and pleasant company of the children.

Some weeks agoe there came out the *Censure of the Rota on Mr. Dryden's Conquest of Granada*, which I lightly read over, for it deserv'd little consideration. Indeed I was surpriz'd at the indiscretion of the Author to venture his poor thinn Off-spring to seek its Fortune in cold winter weather, but especially in such a dangerous time, when there was great need of wast Paper. Alas, how could he help his weak book, though it made sad moan, crying out

Deferor in vicum vendentem thus & odores.

Poor Author he imagin'd no harm, he only made use of the *Saturnalia*, as servants used to doe, make bold with his betters, and so forth. Thus much I did then argue for his simplicity, finding him to be so obliging to Mr. Dryden as to pick excellencies out of his Play, on purpose to affront him, that many Readers believ'd, it design'd by one of his best freinds for a complement to show the world, that if any one attempted to wound his honour,

honour, the Archers vanity did not so much lye in abusing his time to split an hair, as to hit a thing out of his reach.

The Author of the *Rota*

— & est mihi saepe vocandus

Ad partes,

has shew'd in his censure so little conversation with Greek and Latin, nay English Poets, as I shall prove by and by, that it is disputed by some, whether it was simplicity or madness provoked him to paint himself in colours so ridiculous. In all reason Mr. *Dryden* will give me little thanks, since the goodness of an ominous cause may lose much of its lustre by the badness of the Orator; yet let Mr. *Dryden* look on with some diversion, since he would not be himself should he seem at the least concern'd, whilst his laurel which he deservedly wears has sufficient virtue to defend it self from the *bruta fulmina* of any loose tongue.

Now give me leave to tell you, that having read the *Censure*, I had a great desire to find out the place where this *Cabal* sat: so one day meeting with one of my acquaintance, I ask'd him if he had read such a Pamphlet, he told me, he had lost so much time as to read it, and if I would goe with him he would bring me to their *Academy* which was a large room in a Coffee-house kept for them, where thrice a week they met retir'd

tir'd from company, but of late since the Printing of the *Censure*, they find none so hardy as to Answerer it, they have admitted a free access, with design, I believe, that they telling the threats of the *Virtuosi*, and with what severity the answer is sure to be handled, might deter the Writer from any further proceeding, and make him consult his safety in the throwing away of his pen. I very gladly embrac'd this newes, and bid him lead the way. We came soon to the place, and somewhat too soon, for the *Athenian Virtuosi*, to give them their beloved title, were not yet come, and the door-keeper said he durst not let any in, before the *Virtuosi* came, lest the room should be crowded, and several curiosities by handling be misplac'd; but I knew what the Fellow drove at, so gently tickling him in the hand, he let us in, where we prov'd him a lyar, by finding some company expecting, and one man with a goose-quill in his ear very busily marshalling books, paper, and pens: Asking one of the company who he was, I was answer'd he was *Secretary* to the *Society*; a worthy employment, thought I, and without doubt a worthy person; I presently made my address to him, desiring to know how long it would be before the *Athenian Virtuosi* met? The clean beast, after much chewing of the cud, answer'd, it would be *Thirty minutes*. I admir'd at the periphrasis of the *Secretary* of the *Criticks*, but I left him, fearing to dis-

gust the man, having more mind to view the Academy. The first thing I beheld, was o'r the chimney instead of a chimney-piece a Label held up in the beakes of two Owles, and in it these words written,

The Coffee-Academy of the Athenian Virtuosi instituted by Apollo for the advancement of Gazet-Philosophy, Mercurie's Diurnals, &c.

and underneath these words written,

Οἱ τῶν κριτικῶν κριτικῶτατοι.

Having read the Label I told my Friend the design of the Owles was very natural, because they were birds sacred to *Minerva*, and the *Virtuosi* went under the notion of *Athenians*; but that their Academy should be under the patronage of *Apollo*, I thought was not regular to the traditions of poetry, nor any way agreeing with history; and I wondered that these Criticks in poetry should be so over-seen. My Friend told me he admired at the absurdity, but who must judge the Criticks? He proceeded with the belief, that those were not Owles, but two of the *Virtuosi*, since they resembled the nature of those birds, being afraid to come abroad

abroad and spy faults fairly by the light of reason, lest they should be peckt at by every puny writer, and prosecuted with all the scorn, and derision imaginable, but love to flutter about in the dark, and make a noise in the twilight of prejudice. I then askt him, why the Academy thought it fit, to place it self in a Coffee-house, since it was instituted by *Apollo*; it had been more agreeable to have been in a Tavern; O, said he, that may be for many reasons, first, as well to hinder expences, as to vindicate the sober inclinations of the persons; since they intended to tax the manners of a poet as well as his writings, it was convenient at least to be hypocrites, and to disguise their own; and Coffee being esteem'd by its admirers a suppresser of fumes, and a great friend to the memory, they might be so simple to hope, it would put *ideas* into their heads, that were never there before: he added that they were inventing a drink for their own use of Hellebore, and other ingredients, which will so refine their gross conceptions, that at length they should be rendred so acute as to make faults in the writings of any man. Or perhaps another reason is for the better divulging the fame of the *Virtuosi*, since persons of all qualities from all parts resorted to such places. I told him that could be no great reason, for they might hire a poor fellow for a small matter who would soon call the multitude together with a trum-

pet, or they might steal the Tablet from the Scriveners shop, wherein is written, The Office of Intelligence, and hang it at their street door, where when any poet shall come in he may be certified whether any longer he shall have fame or no fame, whether that shall live or die after death, whether poetry should be to him a rich wife or a poor wife, or whether he should have many children by her, and all this, without the help of *judicial Astrology*: And I further told him, I should rather call this place a *Lottery* than an *Academy*, since that was more usual in a Coffee-house, and a good poet in this place might draw twenty blanks before one prize; and I wish't that speaking of false wit, as well as false newes, had been lyable to the punishment of the proclamation. Having paraphras'd a little upon this inscription, we lookt about, and beheld that on one side of the room were set up the heads of many Grammarians, and Criticks, and on the other side the heads of Greek and Latin and some English poets, amongst whom I wondred at these mighty three, *Hopkins*, *Sternbold*, and *Wild*, D D, but I was soon pacified when I found *Charilus* amongst the Greeks, and *Bathyllus* amongst the Latins; and why should any good Author repine, that he is excluded, may not the *Virtuosi* set up whom they please, may they not set up their own heads, nay upon poles, if they please, in their own room?

room ? But I ask'd my Friend why Dr. *Wild* wore a different wreath from all the rest, when every one else had one of *Bayes*, he had one of *Herrings* ? My Friend told me he heard the reason of a Gentleman that was here the other night. The Author of the Censure of the *Rota*, you must know, is very intimate with Dr. *Wild*, and was with him eating of Herrings, when his Spouse run out with a herrings tail bobbing in her mouth, to receive the Letter from the Post which brought the joyful newes of his Majesties toleration. Now this Academy being instituted, and several poets heads being to be set up, a Letter was dispatched to Dr. *Wild* to invite him to be Prolocutor to the *Virtuosi*, (since it is well known, he writes as maliciously and as poorly as any of them) but in the close they ask'd him, since 'twas the honour the Academy intended him, whether his head should be set amongst the Criticks, or the Poets, (and indeed he might very well be either) he return'd them great thanks for the great honour they design'd him, but as for that weighty place to be Prolocutor, he begg'd some time to consider on it: As to the other favour of being set up, either as Poet or Critick, he told them plainly, he was ambitious of both, and did not much care if his head was divided, and half set amongst the Poets, and half amongst the Criticks; but on second thoughts, he referr'd all to their better

better judgments, with this *proviso*, if they should set him amongst the Poets, he might wear a wreath of *Her-rings*, since they alwayes brought him good luck, when he had any thing to do with them, wondring why *Will. Lilly* could never find good omens hoarded up for him in the house of *Pisces*. So in fine he kiss'd their hands with this resolution, that he did not doubt but they would become him better than his *Bayes*. For this reason you see him thus adorn'd, and I was told last night that the Academy finds him more pliant than ever, and are in great hopes of obtaining that malicious person to strengthen their party. Since he hates innocent ceremonies, and beauty in the Church, why may he not abhorr them in any thing? Having wearyed our eyes with these objects, we turn'd about, and at the end of the room were three *presses*, without any *books* in them, with *Optimi* written upon the first, *Mediocres* upon the second, and *Mali* upon the third, which presses I soon imagin'd to be the *Thecæ* for books, as they were esteem'd of by the *Virtuosi*. I laughing ask'd my Friend which he thought the worst (with leave from the Criticks) either *Mediocres*, or *Mali*? But he told me it were better to let this paradox alone now, and pass on, lest we should be prevented by their coming. So walking up the room we found whole rows of *teeth*, and many *nailes* sow'd upon cloath, and pinn'd to the hang-

hanging ; and looking more earnestly, I perceiv'd that mo't of them were such as we call doggs teeth. I could not imagine at present that these were meant to make good my simile, I apply'd to them ; nor did I think that the *Virtuosi* were Toothdrawers. Yet they would be glad that their adversaries teeth and nailes were drawn, for even then a lyon would be an innocent beast. But a little rurther we beheld many engins of torture : here indeed was the scene of death, here was one book suspended, another torn upon a tenterhook, a third dead from a stab receiv'd from a cruel Penknife; drawing nearer I found them all belonging to Mr. *Dryden*. Here lay *Almanzor* stretcht upon the rack, that pain might force out words far distant from his thoughts ; here the *Maiden Queen* lay deflowr'd, and there the *Indian Emperour* was defac'd with the scratches of a barbarous stile. Whilst my Friend and I were finding a name fit to decry these most unjust proceedings, we heard the door unlock, and the door-keeper cry out, Make room there for *Aristarchus*, *Scribonius*, and *Opilius*, make room I say for *Hyginus*, *Palæmon*, and *Orbilius*. I was amaz'd at these thundring names, considering whether or no, the Academy design'd this for an exemplary distich ; at last I remembered these were great Criticks, and Gram-marians, and that *Orbilius* was *Horace's* School-master,

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and had whipt him often for not learning his lesson in old *Livius Andronicus*, wherefore he was stil'd by him *plagosus*. Now thought I, these *Virtuosi* imitate the Popes, As they assume the gentle names of *Innocent*, *Clement*, and *Pius*, when they are *bloody*, *unmerciful*, and *irreligious*, so these wear the names of great Grammarians, whilst they all deserve with naked posteriors to tremble under the falling rod of the fierce *Orbilius*. They had scarce plac'd themselves, when more came in, but were Anonymous, 'twas no matter, I could tell who and what they were, by this gleek of circumstances, the shrug, the shaking of the head, and tossing back the peruke with indignation : they had just reacht the table, when the door-keeper with a great deal of breath cry'd out, *Make room for Cassus the Author of the Censure of the Rota* ; bless me, said I to my Friend, why is he called *Cassus* ? Why, said he, I will tell you, he affects that name being delighted with the story of a certain poet called *Cassus*, who writ so much, that his very papers suffic'd to burn him when he was dead ; he has vow'd to scribble so much if he lives. Alas, he values not the quality, so there be quantity, he is resolv'd to keep his vow, and to write any thing against any body : he has many general Pamphlets ready, that as soon as any new book is out with a little alteration, whip he carryes them to the book-seller.

seller, he is a perfect *Stubbist*, who though he must for ever despair to have those parts, and that learning, yet has attain'd to that likeness in his will to contradict every one. I smil'd at the strangeness of his humour, and whilst he was held in some serious discourse, by one as he was coming on, I wondred at the elocution of his gestures, he would so knit his browes, and work the muscles of his mouth. I assur'd my self he was in labour, and us'd that midwifery to bring his imaginations to the birth: when he was delivered, he was a great enemy to the mans buttons, and would so stare in his face, forcing him to a smile, which he took for approbation, when the poor man did it only to be rid of him. Being sat down he bid the Secretary bring the teeth and the nailes; at this I concluded that these Criticks really us'd them in biting, and tearing other mens works; and I was confirm'd in this opinion, when I perceiv'd every one busy, but most of all *Cassus*, setting some of the sharpest of them into his upper jaw, where I presume he had lately broke some of them out in meddling with some piece of Mr. *Dryden's Conquest of Granada*, that prov'd too hard for his teeth. Now every one having fitted himself with tusks, and talons, *Aristarchus* rose up, and made a short speech. It was an *Encomium* upon the *Virtuosi*, and the happiness of this age, wherein such judicious persons had taken the

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great trouble, for the benefit of mankind, to give each Poet that desert which their examination should allow him. After this *Scribonius* told them, that *Mr. Dryden* derided their *Censure*, and held the *Virtuosi* in that contempt, as if they were not; Does he so, says *Cassus*, does *Almanzor* despise those that would reclaim his rage? I would *Mr. Dryden* were here, or any of his admirers to speak for him; Secretary, bring hither his *Conquest of Granada*, and there I could show him innumerable Errataes; which that he opened the Play, and scratching the leaves very carelessly, cry'd out, here's a fault, and there's a fault, where is there not a fault, if we will make them so, dares he, or any one deny it? At this dull impertinency, I could not forbear smiling; which *Cassus* perceiving, ask'd me, if I would be so bold as to defend him? I told him, if he would draw up *Mr. Dryden's* faults under some heads that I might make my plea, I would endeavour to take off his objections. Why then, said he, if you have perpended my *Censure*, as I cogitate you have, you may there animadvert, that the Author Scholastically prosecutes *Mr. Dryden dupliciter. Primò*, for the irrationality of the transcendentality of his *Idea's*. *Secundo*, for his superboſity, in prostrating the fame of defunct, and breathing Authors. I was so startled to hear *Cassus* alter his stile, that turning about to ask what tongue he

he spoke in, my Friend imagining my surprize told me in my ear, that *Cassus* was a great *Term-driver*, and had two wayes of speaking, the one more moderate, as I had heard, and this last was in use, when he would stupify a shopkeeper, confound a chambermaid, or puzzle his antagonist. Having now consider'd the meaning, I told him, if I might obtain a patient ear, I would make some answer. At this, *Cassus* called for his breast-plate, on which was writ, *The Author of the Censure of the Rota*: it serv'd both for pride and for defence, I wish he would wear it alwayes in the streets, for then if he should chance to lose his way, he would never be lost, but be sent home by a Bedle safe to the Academy. Having arm'd himself, *Eja age*, said he, if you will act in any *Hypothesis* dissentaneous to this famous Circle, I my self provoke to a contrary ratiocination, and *Cassi gratia* the *Virtuosi* will give you auscultation. After I had blow'd my nose, I thus began. Your first objection (*O Virtuosi Athenian*) is in the language of *Cassus* against the irrationality of the transcendentality of Mr. *Dryden's Ideas*, which for my countrymens take, I thus faithfully render into English, against the unreasonable extravagance of Mr. *Dryden's* conceptions, which ye have strove with much labour to find in his *Conquest of Granada*: so whilst I am defending that, I shall all the while vindicate an Heroick

Poem, which must be by showing you, what the Masters of Poetry esteem to be its latitude, in what consists its grandeur, and what renders it incapable of that title. As for its latitude, I must lay down before you the definition of its subject, which is Heroick vertue. By *Aristotle* it is called divine, not because it was peculiar to the Gods, but when a man was endued with this vertue, it elevated him above mankind, and as much as humane nature could bear, it rendred him like a Deity; therefore it is defin'd by the best Moralists, a habit of mind not attain'd by humane industry, but inspir'd from above, to undergo great actions with an irresistible violence, and a most happy success, which other mortals were not able to perform. Without doubt Mr. *Dryden* made his *Almanzor* after this original, making him to do things above nature though not against it, placing in his soul humanity and fierceness mingled together, and him in a sphere rather nearer the *Hero* of *Homer*, than of *Scudery*. Not so much a Greek as to imitate *Achilles* in his ferity, nor so Frenchified as to admire the stupidity of *Oroondates* in weeping at the feet of his Mistress. Since Mr. *Dryden* in this description has followed the precepts of Philosophy, all unprejudic'd Men with reason must speak for *Almanzor*, that with *Achilles* Mr. *Dryden* has rendred him invulnerable, unless his detractors by wounding him in
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the heel, will discover as much their fear as their baseness. I think there is no need to urge this clear point any further, but to pass on and to tell you, in what consists its grandeur. It is plac'd by all in a lofty stile, and in the rapture of a Poet. Look up (O *Athenian Virtuosi*) and see my witnesses! O *Homer* dost thou hear this illiterate Censure,

*Nec labra moves, cum mittere vocem
Debueras, vel marmoreus vel abeneus?*

Were ye but acquainted with him he would tell ye, that he makes his *Achilles* speak *ἑστία πτερόεντα* winged words. Ask but *Pindar*, he will assure you that he never adorns his Heroes but he must let fly expressions, which which he calls *Olymp. 9. οἷς δὲ* arrowes, which do in another place *καλαδίσσοντι* make a noise. Surely if we had not lost his pæans, his dithyrambicks, or his tragedies, we should have found in them far bolder flights. Yet the generous *Thebans* thought his numbers only lofty, never extravagant. The divinity of such well built lines crown'd him even whilst he liv'd, and sav'd his house when he was dead. This mighty spirit of Poetry is admir'd in *Alceus*, and stil'd by *Dion. Halicarnassensis* in as mighty words,

Ἀλκαίῃς σκόπηι τὸ μεγαλοφύες, καὶ ἡδὺ μὲν δεινότητι.

Consider the mighty spirit of *Alceus*, what sweetness

ness there is even in its terrour. This is that which *Virgil* aims at, when he says,

— *Paulo majora canamus.*

And *Lucan* when he says,

Surgat mihi carminis ordo.

This is that which *Horace* names *serm. 10. lib. 1. Forte epos*, a strong Heroick verse. For this, *Martial* praises *Virgil* calling him *Cothurnatus*, and his Heroick Poem *lib. 5. Grande opus*.

Juvenal describes such a Poet with the title of *egregius*, and with

Sat. 7. qualem nequeo monstrare, & sentio tantum,

He knew not how to express him, this made him fancy *Virgil* like a fury, and tells us that if he had been poor,

— *caderent omnes à crinibus hydri.*

'Twas in this the critick *Longinus* said *Juvenal* excell'd τῇ πομπικῇ λέξει a pompous expression,

And this is that which the judicious Greeks call'd πᾶν ἐκ διαβόλου γράφειν ἐκ ἀπὸ τῶν χειλῶν with a resolution, and not superficially.

My last design is to lay before you what renders an Heroick Poem incapable of its title.

Pindar will tell you *Olymp. 9.* that if he would delineate an *Hero*, he must abstain from χαμαιπτείαν λόγων, from words that are flat and creeping upon the earth.

Virgil says in his sixth Eclog, that *Apollo* admonish'd

nish'd him in his ear as unfit to sing of Kings and bat-
tels, having used himself in his Pastorals to a humble
verse,

— *Pastorem Tityre pingues*

Pascere oportet oves, deductum dicere carmen.

Horace is then exalted when he speaks

Nil parvum, aut humili modo. lib. 3. Ode 25.

And in his *Arte Poetica* laughs at that Poet for not
continuing his heroick Poem with the same gallantry ;
and for his offence brands him with,

Quid dignum tanto feret hic promissor biatu ?

Juvenal allowes a flat verse no better name than

Carmen triviale. Sat. 7.

And *Martial* hates it, calling it *carmen supinum. lib. 2.*
and presently after,

Mollem debilitate Galliam bon.

A languid verse fit only for the mouth of *Cybele's*
effeminate Priests.

Sure what the Epigrammatist thinks unfit for him-
self, an Heroick Poet must be asham'd to use.

These few Testimonies out of a crowd, I have produced,
to complement the Academy, but if I have spoke in an
unknown tongue I wish I had been better inform'd
of your ignorance, that I might not have given my
self the trouble. Therefore to speak to your capacities,
I will bring all these witnesses in one, I mean the immor-
tal

tal Cowley, than whom none knew better to make or judge a Poem. In praising of Sr. Wm. Davenants Gondibert, he seems to characterize Mr. Dryden's Conquest of Granada.

*Thy mortals do their Gods excel,
Taught by thy Muse to fight, and love so well.
So God-like Poets do past things rehearse,
Not change, but heighten Nature, by their verse.*

Thus I have with hasty touches drawn out the masculine beauty of an Heroick Poem; now if this censur'd play of Mr. Dryden's be of it self exact and true, if it is fram'd by the rules of art, and keeps it self strict to the laws and canons of ancient Poets, as many of his envious enemies acknowledge, if you tear off the title page, and represent it without any relation to him, then this impertinent Censure without any violence will of it self fall to the ground, being supported by so weak a foundation as prejudice. When Criticks shall be found to be like foolish Parishioners, who in themselves commend what they hear, untill they look up, then they mislike the man, and by their consequence the Sermon. Thus the Conquest of Granada, as Conquest of Granada, is a very good play, but as made by Mr. Dryden fit to be exploded, when all Poets from Homer down to Ben, were esteem'd good, if their Judges could ascribe to them Ciceroes commendation;

Pro

Pro Archia Poeta mentis viribus excitari, & quasi divino quodam spiritu afflari.) But Mr. Dryden because he goes by his own name, must not have the essence of a Poet, that is fiction, nay he must lose the portion of a son, and with quiet render up, or else those goodly fields of fancy, the uninterrupted inheritance of his forefathers must be confiscated because he has offended this Committee. His Muse must turn Quaker, or else be accounted light, she must have nothing to do with that goodly pride of figures, conceits, raptures, and sentences, without which gawdy retinue Mr. Cowley's Muse never took the air.

I know the sons of the Poets have far less revenues, than their forefathers enjoy'd. The Greek Poets besides the other five, had a whole dialect appropriated to themselves, they might sound out *æss æss* without offence. This made *Martial* complain in his time, that they could not renew the same lease, but had lost many of their priviledges; yet it was very well with them, if we consider the inconveniencies of their children, whilst the barbarous Criticks of these times are so whimsycal, and so unjust, as to allow some their own freedoms, and some none. If Mr. Dryden upon necessity uses *Enallage numeri* when Greek and Latin commanded it, and English Poets very often make use of it, since the idiom of our tongue will bear it in prose,

D

but

but better in verse, it is put down for an unpardonable enormity. I will forbear quotations to prove this known point, lest I prove my self Pedantick, and you more absurd.

If Mr. Dryden, as *Persius* styles it, *librat in Antithetis*, that is, use a seeming contradiction, which in all poets is and must be esteem'd wit, shall nevertheless wilfully be damned by this Academy, as in your Censure.

*Thus in the triumphs of soft peace I reign,
And from my walls, defie the powers of Spain.*

O the stupidity of the *Virtuosi*! it would puzzle any one to imagine what they aime at here: these Criticks sure have pick'd them out for some default, so that I am forc'd to imagine this.

Pray observe this kind of excellency in two of the best Poets, *Virg.* 11. speaking of *Camilla*.

*Orsilochum fugiens, magnumque agitata per orbem
Eludit gyro interior, sequiturque sequentem.*

Mr. Cowley in his *Dav.* lib. 1. speaking of writing, and as it were prophesying what this Academy, and *Cassus* especially intends to do;

*And with her spurious brood loads now the press,
Laborious effects of idleness.*

I will add no more, though these great Poets delight much in them, yet be it spoken to your folly, that 'tis your unhappiness to light upon an accurate verse to vilifie
your

your selves, not him, and since 'tis drawn out, may it be apply'd to you all, that there were more hopes of Triumphs by peace, than by this unsuccessful war.

If Mr. *Dryden* applies an happy Epithete 'tis traduc'd, as in these excellent verses, speaking of *Almanzor*,

A gloomy smile arose

From his bent browes, and still the more he beard,

A more severe, and sullen joy appear'd,

which I am certain is in imitation of *Virgil*, where fierce *Mezentius* stands,

Olli subridens, mixta Mezentius ira,

which Mr. *Cowley* renders finely,

with half a smile, and half a frown,

or as it is in *Claudian IV Cons. Honorii*.

— *Torva voluptas*

Frontis,

and in many places of this Poet; but I shall hasten: If Mr. *Dryden* makes his verse run musically, or fills it with an argument, it is call'd tick-tack, as thus:

Know that as Selin was not won by thee,

Neither will I, by Selins daughter be.

Would you your hand in Selins blood embrue,

Kill him unarm'd, who arm'd shunn'd killing you.

whilst you are ignorant he imitates *Ovids* humour in these neat numbers, *Met. lib. 10.*

Ex omnibus unum

D 2

Elige

Elige Myrrha virum, dum non sit in omnibus anus ;
and again in his 9. lib.

Quam bene Caune tuo poteram nurus esse parenti,
Quam bene Caune meo, poteras gener esse parenti ;
and in his Epistles,

O Jove digna viro, ni Jove nata fores.

The Original is esteem'd by all good judges, and why do you condemn the true copy, but because you are bad? If Mr. Dryden heightens the sence with a simile, it is not like to pass, when all Poets ever use it, and an Heroick proclaims with *Pindar Olymp. XI.* he cannot be without it.

ἔστιν αἰθέριος ἀέρας χεῖρος, ὅς τ' ὑπάρχει
ὕδατος &c. ἢ ὅ σὺ πῶς τις εὖ πηγάς.

That in such cases as these, men must use the descriptions of winds, and waters &c. if they do labour to bring their work to a good effect. If Mr. Dryden illustrates his Poems, with spirits and immaterial beings, this cannot disgust any one, but the *Sad-
duces* of the age, who believe they have none, since as a Poet he may lawfully make use of them: for what Heroick Poet is there either Greek or Latin, that does not introduce very often θεὸν ἀνὰ μηχανήν: yet as a philosopher he will be defended by the Pythagorical, and Platonical opinion, which held these regions of the air under the concave of the Moon to be inhabited

habited by *Dæmons*. If Mr. *Dryden* keeps the signification of words within their limits, you will venture to call him vagabond, though you declare your selves absolutely unacquainted with authors, or grammar, as in this fragment of a verse,

Thou treadst the abyss of light.

You assert here that abyss is so inconsistent with light, that 'tis scarce bright enough for its shadow, whilst by proving the contrary let the world judge, if the darkness of your understanding, does not advantage the lustre of Mr. *Dryden's* glory. | Abyss properly signifies extream deep waters, *quasi* ἀβυσσὸς an Ionick word for εὐρύς. This *Favorinus* and *Hesychius*, this *Minshæus* and *Vossius* with others, account the truest etymologie of the word, yet with *Calepine* grant, that it may be usurped, as it is by the Greeks, for an epithete to signifie any thing that is endless, which is prov'd by several Synonymous expressions of Scripture, and from St. *Chrysostome* who calls infinite labours πόνον ἀβυσσόν.

This shall suffice O *Cassus* to prove thy ignorance, and little familiarity with classick authors, whilst this discovers thy malice, in making *Porphyrius* an Hermaphrodite by this verse,

And Daughter, I will will give him you, for wife:
Where as you please *Porphyrius* by misplacing the notional comma is either a man or a woman.

Thus

Thus like the Divil you æquivate in your oracles,
but at last like him you are found a lyar. I would
willingly leave off defending Mr. Dryden, when he
needs it not, was he not impeach'd with such animosi-
ty, for his strange flights, and that it may not be law-
ful for him to mount lest his wings be clipt, whilst Ho-
race tells judicious *Mecenas*, he is turn'd into a Swan,
and mounts and leaves these things blow. Whilst *Virgil*
is sweetly Hyberbolical in many places, but especi-
ally in his description of *Camilla*, lib. 7.

Illæ vel intactæ segetis per summa volaret

Gramina, nec teneras cursu læsisset aristas.

Vel mare per medium fluctu suspensa tumentis

Ferret iter, celeres nec tingeret æquore plantas.

And *Claudian Raptu Proser.* lib. 2. sayes that *Pluto's*
horses ran,

Torrentius amne

Hyberno, tortaque ruunt pernicious basta;

Quantum non jaculum Parthi, non impetus Austri,

Non leve sollicitæ mentis discurrit acumen.

I will mention but one verse more of this Poet
(though he is very luxuriant) in the end of the first
book speaking of the same horses,

Ægra soporatis spumant oblivis linguas.

Which I would beg the *Academy* if it can to translate
handsomely into English. Yet *Julius Scaliger* gives this

cen-

censure of him. *Fælix in eo calor, temperatum judicium, dictio candida, numeri non affectati.* I have the rather taken these Testimonies because as *Virgil* follow'd *Horner*, so *Mr. Cowley* has thought it fit to imitate them all, *Horace* in his *Extasie*, *Virgil* and *Claudian* in his description of *Asahel*,

*Asahel Swifter than the Northern wind,
Scarce could the nimble motions of his mind
Outgoe his feet ; so strangely would he run,
That Time it self perceiv'd not what was done.
Oft or'e the lawns, and meadows would he pass
His weight unknown, and harmless to the grass ;
Oft or'e the Sands, and hollow dust would trace
Yet no one Ato-ne trouble, or deface.*

I am in haste, and will forget *Seneca's* Tragedies, historical *Lucan* and *Statius*, because *Mr. Dryden* is said to borrow many things from him, lest I should seem to produce him a witness for himself ; let me only bring up the rear of my witnesses with one Testimony more of the much admir'd *Mr. Cowley* in his *Pindarick* call'd the *Muse*, he tells her,

*Whatever God did say
Is all thy plain, and smooth uninterrupted way.
Nay even beyond his works thy voiajes are known,
Thou hast thousand worlds too of thine own.*

Thou

*Thou speak'st great Queen, in the same stile as He,
 And a new world leaps forth when thou say'st, let it be.
 Sure he is more fit to set the bounds of Poetry than
 you, since all allow a Poet the same, what he allowes to
 Mercury, wings at head, and heel. The Poet is per-
 mitted by all to be*

Com nune profundis

*Et superis numen, qui fas per limen utrumque
 Solus habet, geminoque facit commercia mundo.*

Now who are ye (O *Atbenian Virtuosi*) that dare
 set these narrow limits? must the Poet like *Alexander* re-
 pine there are no more worlds but this of yours to move
 in, where he shall soon lose his feet for want of exer-
 cise? If Mr. *Dryden* passes your little *Rubicon*, must
 he be proclam'd an enemy by this Senate, must his ver-
 ses be like *Pliny's Acepballi*, or rather resemble his
 judges, all feet, and extrement, and no head? I will
 stop here, ye have prov'd your selves, I will not make
 you any more ridiculous, only appealing to you whe-
 ther or no this Academy does not represent an *Hobbian*
 state of nature, in presuming to have as great a share
 in wit and judgment as others.

I am at last come to my second objection, which is
 Mr. *Dryden's* superbofity in prostrating the fame of
 defunct, and breathing Authors, which I shall thus
 translate, Mr. *Dryden's* pride in contemning dead, and
 living

living Authors. To which I shall not speak much, because I am so great a stranger to him, therefore I can only produce his own words to vindicate their Master, and if he wrongs them no more in his thoughts than in his writings he may safely plead Not guilty. In his *Essays* and *prefaces*, as he payes veneration to the dead, so he payes submission to the living : though he cannot admire any of them blindly. And it is so unjust a calumny to urge that he labours to pluck leaves from the *Baies* of *Ben. Johnson*, when he adds to them by styling him incomparable, one to be admir'd for many excellencies. In his preface to *Maximin*, he does not pretend any thing of his own to be correct, but submits his faults to the mercy of the Reader, being as little apt to defend his own errors, as to find those of others. In his defence of his *Epilogue*, he ascribes to dead Authors their just praises in those things where they have excell'd us ; and in those where we contend with them for preheminance, he acknowledges the advantage to the age, and not to wit. There might be produc'd many places which do strongly pronounce his judicious modesty : if he discovers any faults in other Poets, 'tis because his are too severely handled by others, and the reason why he does disturb the dead, is only that they would rise, and plead for him, as he professes in his *Epilogue to the Conquest of Granada*.

'Tis not to brand them that their faults are shown,
But by their errors to excuse his own.

If in the feaver of his writing he has discover'd any passion, the impertinency of the age is to be blam'd for troubling him, otherwise he is more to be esteem'd for his judgment than censur'd for his heat. If he tells us that *Johnson* writ by art, *Shakespeare* by nature; that *Beaumont* had judgment, *Fletcher* wit, that *Comley* was copious, *Denham* lofty, *Waller* smooth, he cannot be thought malicious, since he admires them, but rather skilfull that he knows how to value them.

Mr. *Dryden* shall answer in *Horace's* words, when he had offended many in meddling with *Lucilius*, to guide

Tu nihil in magno defectu reprehendis Homani?

Nil comis tragici mutat Lucilius Atti?

Non ridet versus Enni gravitate iuvenis?

Quum de se loquitur, non ut majore repressis?

Martial makes a distich on *Horace*, for patching up his verses with *Virgil's*, thought his was done grinning, yet any one may give his censure of another, so it produces nothing but candour, and judgment, as

Persius gives his opinion of *Horace*,

Omne vaser vitium ridenti Flaccus amico

Tangit, & admissis circum precordia ludit,

Callidus excusso populum suspendere maffi

But not like you (O Athenian Virtuosi) make faults

where

where there are none. If the *Fopps* of the age are stung, that they kick up dirt, no person can blame Mr. *Dryden* for lashing them, since it would grieve any one, nay it would raise the choler of any ingenious man to that degree against them, when such will be so inconsiderate, nay so absurd, to censure a Poet, whilst they themselves cannot write, and perhaps not read, with commendation. This stirr'd up many antient Poets, and what Poet ever escaped such sinful examiners? It vex'd *Martial*; that at last he told them his verses were bad, yet he challeng'd them to mend them,

Hæc mala sunt, sed tu non meliora facis.

After this manner Mr. *Dryden* has provok'd the miserable jury of this age, but much handsomer,

You blame those faults, which you want wit to make.

Mr. *Dryden* having rebated the edge of all objections that can be brought to defend your assertion, it would appear very inconsistent with modesty to alledge his arguments for my own; since he has found so good, and I can find no better, and 'tis to himself he must give the thanks, that he stands arm'd cap-a-pee. I will no longer give my humanity the trouble, in reclaiming, if it were possible, your folly; but only acquaint you that Mr. *Dryden* salutes you in a *Semistanza* of your much honour'd *Hopkins*.

From all the sins that I have done,
 Lord quit me out of hand:
 And make me not a scorn to fools,
 That nothing understand.

At this *Cassus* started up, and told me, I was sawcy, not in observing that decorum, which the gravity of the place requir'd. After some whispering the door-keeper was commanded to clear the room, and to take special notice of me, that I might be let no more into the *Academy*, with the assurance that I should upon occasion be severely dealt with for this rudeness. My Friend and I departed much pleas'd with this scene of mirth: at his lodging we found a hypocritical pamphlet aginst Mr. *Dryden* left by his book-seller; after a short view I perceiv'd the needy Author plaid the plagiarist, having transcrib'd all those objections from *Cassus*, which *Cassus* had borrow'd from the *Rehearsal*, whence 'tis easy to gather, that it is difficult to find fault with Mr. *Dryden*, when his enemies are forc'd to tautologize. Indeed the Burlesque way of writing is the most hopeful to abuse a good Author, since the fantastick dress tickles the Reader, and makes him laugh whether he will or no; and that the good old axiom would hold here, *corruptio optimi fit pessima*.
 My

My Friend told me he was sorry we must part so soon, having appointed to meet some persons hard by, amongst whom he expected Mr. Dryden, promising me to find some other time, (if I thought it fit) to descant upon that book before us, and to divertise me with some beloved fancies of *Cassus*. At this I took my leave, desiring him to take his *Horace* with him, and to turn to *serm.* 10. lib. 1. where Mr. Dryden might read these verses out of his intimate acquaintance.

*Men' moveat cimex Pantilius? aut cruciet quod
Vellicet absentem Demetrius? aut quod ineptus
Fannius Hermogenis ladat conviva Tigelli?
Plotius, & Varius, Mecenas, Virgiliusque,
Valgius, & probet hac Octavius optimus, atque
Fuscus, & hac utinam Viscarum laudet uterque.*

FINIS.

(35)

A Postscript.

TWO things may here be inquir'd after, why Mr. Dryden is defended, since the unsavoury breath which proceeds from the fore-door of those windy Criticks, is to be regarded no more than that of the back-door, since they are both doom'd to the same date, to live for a moment and then to expire; but if he is defended, why so late, when delay will argue heaviness, or fear; indeed I neither bit my nates nor scratch'd my head for this, nor will I conceit my Antagonist, like Hercules, a conquerour in his cradle, but rather, one of those Lapwing-writers, who venture to run with the shell on their backs, the conscience of which rashness has alwaies so much deterr'd me, that this which was drawn up long agoe for my own diversion, should have slept in quiet, if the compliance to some had not been a motive to the contrary. Yet in this skirmish, I hope his presumption may be sufficient to keep me from despair.

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Errata.

Page 7. line 2. for Answerer, read answer, line 5. for answer, read Answerer.
p. 17. line 16. r. provoke you, line 19. r. *Albenian Virtuosi*. p. 28. l. 8. for blow,
i. below.